Shakespeare (W.)

THE

DIVERTING HISTORY

OF THE

LIFE, MEMORABLE EXPLOITS, PRANKS,

AND

DROLL ADVENTURES,

OF THE MOST

HEROIC, VALIANT and RENOWNED

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF

OF

FACETIOUS MEMORY;

His JESTS, DROLLERIES, COMICAL HUMOURS, QUEER CONCEITS, and most MIRACULOUS ESCAPES, from the WANTON CONTRIVANCES

OF THE

MERRY WIVES of WINDSOR,

As written by SHAKESPEARE.

To which is added,

A Short Dissertation on his Character,

And the HISTORY of the

BOAR's HEAD TAVERN, in EAST-CHEAP,

BY DR. GOLDSMITH.

——Falstaff *is the best of Comic Characters, there are*
Many men resembling him, old, fat, merry, cowardly,
Drunken, amorous, vain, and lying; but Falstaff
Seems inimitable yet. DRYDEN.

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INTRODUCTION,

Or an ESSAY *on the* CHARACTER *of*

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

THE hiſtories of princes and great men, dazzle us by their ſplendor, but uſeful inſtruction is to be learned from the anecdotes of their private life. In the former, the ſcene is laid too far above us, and the objects ſhewn at ſuch a diſtance, that the greater part of mankind can only look up with admiration; but, in their private character, every action is immediately propoſed to immitation or abhorence, and every event is intereſting, as it might have happened to ourſelves.

Hiſtory informs us of the ſocial life Henry the Fifth led with his companions, while Prince of Wales. Shakeſpeare has drawn his character, with a pencil, worthy of himſelf, and the conqueror of France. He has alſo conſigned to immortality, the memory of ſome of his bacchanalian friends; amongſt which, it muſt be confeſſed, Sir *John Falſtaff* cuts a conſpicious figure. Perhaps no character ever gave ſo much pleaſure to the world, as that extenſive collection of ſack, fleſh, and wit, as he has drawn him forth, in his *Henry the Fourth*, and *Merry Wives of Windſor*: and, though the ſack and fleſh are dead, the

wit will never die while the Engliſh language ſurvives; and *Hal* and *Co* ſhall live in faithful repreſentation upon the ſtage, as long as the taſte for theatrical entertainment continues to pleaſe the world.

Critics have ventured to arraign our dramatiſt, for making too free with his moral character, and exhibiting him to the world, as an old, cowardly, laſcivious epicure, a very but for wits to crack their jeſts upon; but for this, the poet had legendary faith to quote, although hiſtory repreſents him, as a valiant and ſerviceable commander in the French wars: In ſhort, his fate, with reſpect to Poſthumous's fame, ſeems to have been ſimilar to that of ſome other great men, who have been waggiſhly repreſented to poſterity, ſome as dealing with the devil, as is the caſe with the memorable inventor of printing, whoſe life has been delivered down to us, under the ludicrous title of the *Hiſtory of the Devil and Doctor Fauſtus*; others, as killing giants and monſters, who were only remarkable for ſubduing their own paſſions; and in ſhort, whatever creative fancy could invent the moſt extravagant to heighten up the character. But the taſte for theſe ludicrous fictions, is now paſſed; and a ſtory is only read with pleaſure, in proportion, as it approaches to nature and truth. Genius has baniſhed theſe extravagancies, and humour ſpeaks the language of the preſent day.

It appears, according to the ſobereſt critics, that, in the character of ſir *John Falſtaff*, Shakeſpeare has expreſsly figured himſelf by the *Deer-Stealer*; in which we perceive the perfection of his genius.

It will not be foreign to our deſign, to examine into the true compoſition of this character. It is evident, the excellency of it lies in a juſt mixture of wit and humour. The ground-work is humour, or the repreſentation and detection of a bragging and vaunting coward in real life. However, this alone would only have expoſed the knight, as a meer Noll Bluff, to the deriſion of the company, and after they had been once gratified with his chaſtiſement, he would have ſunk into infamy and become quite odious. But here the inimitable wit of Sir *John* comes into his ſupport, and gives a new riſe and luſtre to his character; for the ſake of his wit you forgive his cowardice; or rather, are fond of his cowardice for the occaſion it gives to his wit. In ſhort, the humour furniſhes a ſubject and ſpur to the wit, and the wit again ſupports and embelliſhes the humour. At the firſt entrance of the knight, your good humour and tendency to mirth are irreſiſtibly excited by his jolly appearance and corpulency. You feel and ackowledge him to be the fitteſt ſubject imaginable for yielding diverſion and merriment. But, when you ſee him immediately ſet up for enterprize and activity, with his evident weight and unweildineſs, your attention is called forth, and you are eager to watch him to the end of his endeavours. Your imagination points out, with a full ſcope, his future embaraſſments. All the while as you accompany him forwards, he heightens your reliſh for his further diſaſters, by his happy opinion of his own ſufficiency, and the gay vaunts which he makes of his talents and accompliſhments; ſo that at laſt, when he falls into a ſcrape, your expec-

tation is exquiſitely gratified, and you have the full pleaſure of ſeeing all his trumpeted honour laid in the duſt; taken in the midſt of his misfortunes, inſtead of being utterly demoliſhed and ſunk, he riſes again, by the ſuperior force of his wit, and begins a new courſe, with freſh ſpirit and alacrity. This excites you the more to renew the chace, in full view of his ſecond defeat; out of which, he recovers again, and triumphs with new pretenſions and boaſting. After this, he immediately ſtarts upon a third race, and ſo on; continually detected and caught, and conſtantly extricating himſelf by his inimitable wit and invention; thus, yielding a perpetual round of mirth and diverſion. Again, the genteel quality of Sir *John* is of great uſe in ſupporting his character, it prevents his ſinking too low, after ſeveral of his misfortunes: beſides, you allow him, in conſequence of his rank and ſeniority, the privilege to dictate and take the lead, to rebuke others upon many occaſions. By this, he is ſaved from appearing too nauſeous and independent. The good ſenſe which he poſſeſſes comes alſo to his aid, and ſaves him from being deſpicable, by forcing your eſteem for his real abilities. Again, the privilege you allow him, of rebuking and cheating others, when he aſſumes it with proper firmneſs and ſuperiority, helps to ſettle a new and compoſe his character, after an embaraſſment, and reduces, in ſome meaſure, the ſpirit of the company to a proper level, before he ſets out again upon a freſh adventure; without this they would be kept continually ſtrained and wound up to the higheſt pitch, without ſufficient relief and diverſity. It may alſo deſerve to be remarked of

Falſtaff,

Falſtaff, that the figure of his perſon is admirably ſuited to the turn of his mind, ſo that there ariſes before you a perpetual alluſion from one to the other, which forms an inceſſant ſeries of wit, whether they be in contraſt or agreement together; when he pretends to activity, there is wit in the contraſt, between his mind and his perſon; and wit in their agreement, when he triumphs in jollity. To compleat the whole, you have, in this character of *Falſtaff*, not only a free courſe of humour, ſupported and embelliſhed with admirable wit, but his humour is of a ſpecies the moſt jovial and gay in all nature. Sir *John Falſtaff* poſſeſſes generoſity, chearfulneſs, alacrity, invention frolic, and fancy, ſuperior to all other men. The figure of his perſon is the picture of jollity, mirth, and good nature, and baniſhes at once all other ideas from your breaſt. He is happy himſelf and makes you happy. If you examine him further, he has no fierceneſs, reſerve, malice, or peeviſhneſs lurking in his heart; his intentions are all pointed at harmleſs riot and merriment: Nor has the knight any inveterate deſign, except againſt ſack, and that too he loves. If, beſides this, he deſires to paſs for a man of activity and valour, you can eaſily excuſe ſo harmleſs a foible, which yields you the higheſt pleaſure in its conſtant detection. If you put all theſe together, it is impoſſible to hate honeſt *Jack Falſtaff*. If you obſerve them again, it is impoſſible to avoid loving him: He is the gay, the witty, the frolickſome, happy, and fat *Jack Falſtaff*, the moſt delightful ſwaggerer in all nature. You muſt love him for your own ſake; at the ſame time, you cannot but love him for his

his own talents, and when you have enjoyed them, you cannot but love him in gratitude. He has nothing to diſguſt you, and every thing to give you joy. His ſenſe and his foibles are equally directed to advance your pleaſure, and it is impoſſible to be tired or unhappy in his company. This jovial and gay humour, without any thing envious, malicious, miſchievous, or deſpicable, and continually adorned with wit, yields that peculiar delight, without any alloy, which we all feel and acknowledge in *Falſtaff's* company. Ben Jonſon has humour in his characters drawn with the moſt maſterly ſkill and judgment. In accuracy, depth, propriety, and truth, he has no ſuperior, or equal, among the Ancients or Moderns. But the characters he exhibits are of a ſatrical and deceitful, or elſe of a peeviſh or deſpicable ſpecies; as Volpone, Subtle, Moroſe, and Abel Drugger; in all of which there is ſomething very juſtly to be hated or deſpiſed, and you feel the ſame ſentiments of diſlike for every other character of Jonſon's; ſo that, after you have been gratified with their detection and puniſhment, you are quite tired and diſguſted with their company. Whereas, Shakeſpeare, beſides the pecular gaiety in the humour of *Falſtaff*, has guarded him from diſguſting you with his forced advances, by giving him rank and quality; from being deſpicable, by his real good ſenſe and excellent abilities; from being odious, by his harmleſs plots and deſigns; and from being tireſome, by his inimitable wit, and his new and inceſſant ſallies of higheſt fancy and frolic. This diſcovers the ſecret of carrying comedy to the higheſt pitch of delight; which lies in drawing the perſons exhibited with ſuch chear-

chearful and amiable oddities and foibles as you would chuſe in your own companions in real life; otherwiſe, though you may be diverted at firſt with the novelty of a character, and with a proper detection and ridicule of it, yet its peeviſhneſs, meanneſs, or immorality, will begin to diſguſt you after a little reflection, and become ſoon tireſome and odious; it being certain, that whoever cannot be endured as an accidental companion in real life, will, for the ſame reaſons, never become a favourite comic character on the ſtage. This reliſh for generous and worthy characters alone, which we all feel upon the theatre, where no biaſs of envy, malice, or perſonal reſentment, draws us aſide, ſeems to be ſome evidence of our natural and genuine diſpoſition to probity and virtue; though the minds of moſt perſons, being early and deeply tinged with vicious paſſions, it is no wonder that ſtains have been generally miſtaken for original colours. All characters that are well drawn juſtly pleaſe, but not all equally; Jonſon, in his comic ſcenes, has expoſed and ridiculed folly and vice; Shakeſpeare has uſhered in joy, frolic, and happineſs. The Alchymiſt, Volpone, and Silent Woman of Jonſon, are moſt exquiſite ſatires; the comic entertainments of Shakeſpeare, are the higheſt compoſitions of rallery, wit, and humour. Jonſon conveys ſome leſſon in every character; Shakeſpeare, ſome new ſpecies of foible and oddity. The one pointed his ſatire with maſterly ſkill; the other was inimitable, in touching the ſtrings of delight. With Jonſon, you are confined and inſtructed; with Shakeſpeare, content and diſſolved in joy. It may be further remarked, that Jonſon, by pur-

purſuing the moſt uſeful intention of comedy, is obliged, in juſtice, to hunt down and demoliſh his own characters; upon this plan, he muſt neceſſarily expoſe them to your hatred, and of courſe, will never bring out an amiable perſon. But, Shakeſpeare, with happier inſight, always ſupports his characters in your favour: His Juſtice Shallow withdraws before he is tedious: The French doctor and Welſh parſon, go off in full vigour and ſpirits. Ancient Piſtol, indeed, is ſcurvily treated; however, he keeps up his ſpirits, and continues to threaten ſo well, that you are ſtill deſirous of his company: And it is impoſſible to be tired or dull with the gay, unfaiding, ever green *Falſtaff*. Abel Drugger bids faireſt of any of Jonſon's characters for being a favourite of the theater; he has no hatred, malice, or immorality, or any aſſuming arrogance, pertneſs, or peeviſhneſs; and his eager deſire of getting and ſaving money, by methods he thinks lawful, are excuſable in a perſon of his buſineſs. He is, therefore, not odious or deteſtable, but harmleſs and inoffenſive in private life: However, this character, in the whole, is mean and deſpicable, without any of that free, ſpirituous, jocund, humour abounding in Shakeſpeare. It appears, that in imagination, invention, jollity, and gay humour, Jonſon had little power; Shakeſpeare unlimited dominions. The firſt was cautious and ſtrict, not daring to ſally beyond the bounds of regularity; the other bold and impetuous, rejoicing like a giant, to run his courſe, through all the mountains and wilds of nature and fancy. It requires an almoſt painful attention, to mark the propriety and accuracy of Jonſon; and your

ariſes from reflection and compariſon; but the fire and invention of Shakeſpeare are ſhot inſtantaneouſly into your ſoul, and enlighten and clear the moſt indolent mind with their own ſpirit and luſtre.

The reader, who examines into this matter, will obſerve, that the character, here explained, of Sir *John Falſtaff*, is chiefly taken from the firſt part of Henry the Fourth. For, ſo far as Sir *John*, upon any occaſion, ſinks into a cheat or a ſcoundrel, he is different from the *Falſtaff* here deſcribed, which is entirely an amiable character.

According to Mr. Rowe, the *Merry Wives of Windſor*, was written at the expreſs deſire and command of queen Elizabeth, who was ſo delighted with the character of *Falſtaff*, that ſhe wiſhed it to be diffuſed through more plays; but ſuſpecting that it might fall, by continued uniformity, directed the poet to diverſify his manner, by exhibiting him in love. No taſk is perhaps more difficult than writing to the ideas of another. Shakeſpeare knew and felt what the queen ſeems not to have been ſenſible of; that by any real paſſion of tenderneſs, the ſelfiſh craft, the careleſs jollity, and the lazy luxury of *Falſtaff*, muſt have ſuffered ſo much abatement, that little of his former caſt would have remained; for *Falſtaff* could be a lover, but by ceaſing to be *Falſtaff*, he could only counterfeit love, and his fond affections could be only prompted by the love of money. Thus the poet approached as near as he could to the taſk injoined him; yet having, perhaps, in his former plays, compleated his own idea of his character, ſeems not to have been

been able to give his hero all his former power of entertainment.

If this ſtory be true, it is evident, the latter part of Henry the Fourth muſt have been added afterwards, ſince there we have an account of Sir *John's* impriſonment and death, which might perhaps be done by the author, in compliance with decorum, to avoid the imputation of encouraging idleneſs and riot, by too amiable and happy an example. However that be, it is certain, that though *Falſtaff* is here fardle of low vices, a liar, a coward, and a thief, yet his good humour makes him a pleaſant companion, and what not a little ſhews the genius of our poet, he has kept up the ſpirit of his humour, after having wrote two plays before, in this third, though it was put upon him by another. For this reaſon, if it be true, what Mr. Dryden tells us, ſpeaking of Mercutio's character, in *Romeo and Juliet*, that Shakeſpeare ſaid himſelf, he was forced to kill him in the third act, to prevent being killed by him. It muſt be his diffidence and modeſty that made him ſay this; for it never could be through barrenneſs of invention, ſays Mr. Upton, that Mercutio's ſprightly wit was ended in the third act, but becauſe there was no need of him or his wit any longer.

THE

HISTORY, DROLL ADVENTURES, MEMORABLE EXPLOITS,

AND

COMICAL HUMOURS

OF THE

RENOWNED, FACETIOUS, and DIVERTING

Sir JOHN FALSTAFF.

THIS univerſally admired character, is not as ſome ſuppoſe, intirely ideal; and the fanciful creation of that wonderful genius *Shakeſpeare*, who, as it is remarked in the introduction, ſeems to have collected the whole of his comic powers, to enliven this favorite theatric character.

The Hypercritics, whoſe optics reſemble thoſe of the mole, have been rather ſevere with the immortal poet, for having traveſtied a real worthy hiſtorical perſonage into a changeling buffoon; but from the letters which compoſe his name, it appears, at leaſt, very doubtful if he ever entertained any ſuch intention: and as to its ever

having been performed under the name of Sir *John Oldcaſtle*, Shakeſpeare himſelf ſatisfactorily enough has ſettled that point.

Therefore, leaving that matter as it now ſtands in the various accounts of his biographers, we ſhall proceed to relate what has been collected from tradition of this laughter-creating hero; and, firſt, of his real name and actions, the following pages ſhall relate; afterwards whatever can contribute to create mirth and electrify the riſible faculties of the readers, muſt be given upon the *undoubted* authority of *Hearſay*, as ancient a ſtory-teller, and authentic intelligencer, as the moſt antique legend.

John Faſtolff, or *Falſtaff*, knight and knight-banneret, a valiant and renowned general, and nobleman in France, during our conqueſts in that kingdom, under king Henry IV. V. and VI. of England; he was knight of the garter; and in all reſpects an extraordinary perſon; was deſcended of an antient and famous family in Norfolk, and is ſuppoſed to have been born at Yarmouth in that country, about the year 1377. There is no doubt, but a maſter of thoſe accompliſhments, which made him ſo uſeful afterwards in adminiſtrations of the greateſt conſequence, as well as ſuch a promoter and patron of learning, muſt have been very carefully educated. Record is ſilent as to the manner of his education; but we learn that his father, *John Faſtolff*, Eſq; dying before he was of age, he became ward to ſome great nobleman; and it is ſaid, that he was trained up, according to the hoſpitable cuſtom of thoſe times, in the Norfolk family.

Falſtaff,

Falſtaff, it is related, was, when young, the miniature picture of what he afterwards appeared on the theatre; he was a roſy, healthy, jolly boy, his face rather round, his eyes lively, his belly more round than is common to thoſe of his age, in fact, his form very much reſembled a nine pin, biggeſt in the middle, and as his ſlovenly method of eating, by which careleſſneſs, he let fall part of his victuals on his cloaths, he acquired the nick-name of *Fat guts* and *Greaſy coat*, an appellation that ſtuck to him, and which he took care to merit as long as he lived.

During his minority, he gave many ſigns of what was to be his diſtinguiſhing character when arrived at the age of maturity. He was naturally witty, and it was a dry ſort of wit, yet ſo humourouſly expreſſed, and with ſuch an expreſſive ſet of features, that the moſt rigid cynic could not help laughing at his conceits. His volatile diſpoſition, carried him into many of thoſe exceſſes ſo common to the youth of quality of any age, for every age has been the ſame; and young *Falſtaff* was joined by his intimates, whoſe parity of years, and ſituation, made their purſuits congenial to their ſeveral humours.

However, it appears that his connections, as he grew up, were reſpectable, as it may be ſuppoſed, when he is found to be intimately acquainted with ſome of the greateſt perſons at court, and notwithſtanding cowardice in his latter years, made a part of his character and compoſition; yet he muſt have had a very different reputation at his firſt adventuring in the world, as we find him intruſted with commands of conſequence, both civil and military. For about

the year 1401, Thomas of Lancaſter, afterwards duke of Clarence, and ſecond ſon of king Henry IV. was ſent lord lieutenant into Ireland; and our *Falſtaff* probably attended him; for it is affirmed, that he was with him in 1405, and 1406. It is almoſt certain too, that *Falſtaff* was with him in 1408, becauſe at the end of that very year he was married in that kingdom to a rich young widow of quality. Soon after his marriage, receiving ſome conſiderable poſts of truſt under the Engliſh Regency in France, he betook himſelf to reſide in that kingdom. Here he paſſed through ſeveral offices of the higheſt importance, diſtinguiſhed himſelf moſt illuſtriouſly in all the arts of peace and war, and was ſucceſſively crowned with titles and honours.

He did not make his final return to England, till the year 1411, when he was ſummoned to the parliament, which was aſſembled at that time for the purpoſe of alienating the church revenues; and loaded with the laurels he had gathered in France, he now laboured to raiſe a new plantation of them in his own country. At home he ſhone as bright in generoſity, as he had in valour abroad; and became no leſs amiable in his domeſtic, than he had been admirable in his public character.

Whether his wife died abroad, or he brought her home, is quite uncertain; that he had no children by her, I think is plain, as no mention of them is made in any author whatever. And this ſeems clearer ſtill, when we conſider that his connection with *Doll Tearſheet*, was incompatible with that decorum which marked the ſerious ſide of his character. But we may ſuppoſe, that having

ing gained no ſmall ſhare of glory in the wars, and imagining he might hang up his armour in the temple of peace, he gave a looſe to his natural diſpoſition for wit, humour, and drinking, with thoſe other extravagancies, which diſtinguiſhed the manners of his latter carreer.

What eſtate Sir *John* was poſſeſſed of, is not certain, but that it was reſpectable, there is no doubt, and that he diſſipated it, may be eaſily inferred from his manner of living; and that the neceſſities which followed, concomitant with his frolics, induced him to make uſe of clandeſtine means to repleniſh his purſe, and enable him to ſhew away in the company of his ſuperiors, is as plain as it is creditable.

In theſe ſcenes, Sir *John* is drawn as an old man, voluptuous in the articles of wine, women, and the table; reſorting the company of wild young rakes of faſhion, and helping them forward in whatever might contribute to create mirth, however regardleſs what it might coſt, or at whoſe expence it might be purchaſed. His military reputation had been eſtabliſhed long before, and he had now fixed his rendezvous, at the Boar's Head, in Eaſt Cheap, where his conſequence was of great account, as will be hereafter ſhewn.

The Prince of Wales, ſon of king Henry the Fourth, a wild and extravagant youth, took much delight in his company, and was his companion in all his midnight excurſions and debaucheries. The Boar's Head, as we have obſerved before, was their uſual place of reſidence, for it may be ſaid, that they lived in the tavern.

Like rakes of modern faſhion, they were ſometimes brought before their ſuperiors, for their irregularities, as the following anecdote, extracted from an old Chronicle in the Cotton Library, will ſufficiently evince:

A Riot at the Boar's Head Tavern, *in Eaſt Cheap.*

"In the year 1413, the laſt of the reign of "Henry the Fourth, upon the even of Saint "John the Baptiſt, the king's ſons, Thomas and "John, being in Eaſt Cheap at ſupper, (or "rather at breakfaſt) for it was after the watch "had broken up, between two and three o'clock "after midnight, a great debate happened be-"tween their men, and others of the court, "which laſted one hour, till the mayor and "ſheriffs appeaſed the ſame; for the which, "afterwards the ſaid mayor, aldermen, and "ſheriffs, were called to anſwer for the ſame, "before the king, and his ſons, and divers lords, "being highly moved againſt the city; when "Sir William Gaſcoigne, Chief Juſtice, required "the mayor and aldermen, for the citizens to put "them in the king's grace; whereunto they "anſwered, they had not offended, but accord-"ing to the law, had done their beſt in ſtinting "debate, and maintaining the peace; upon "which anſwer, the king remitted all his ire, "and diſmiſſed them."

Here they laid their ſchemes for their intended frolics—here Sir *John* regaled himſelf with his favourite beverage, ſack, and ſugar—and here the

the Prince enjoyed the extraordinary wit and humour of the fat night, who had likewiſe his hours of daliance, with his favourite *Doll Tearſheet*.

Bardolf, Piſtol, and Poins, were his principal companions, whoſe different caſts of humour are ſo wittily and aptly diſplayed by the inimitable pen of Shakeſpeare, that each character is a hero ſufficient for any comedy, at leaſt one of modern *dramatic* fabrication.

The Prince of Wales, afterwards king Henry the Fifth, once out of a frolic, accompanied him on one of his marauding expeditions, on purpoſe to make game of the fat bellied knight.

Falſtaff and his companions had notice of a large ſum of money, which was conveying for the ſervice of government.

Gadſhill was to be the place of rendezvous. The waggons were to go through a wood; they agreed to commit the robbery on foot, and faſten their horſes in a ſecure place, where they might find them, when the buſineſs was done, and make off ſpeedily as poſſible with the booty.

This being agreed on, was accordingly put in execution; but the Prince and Poins removed Sir *John's* horſe, and ſecreted themſelves to enjoy the embaraſſment of the knight, who ſweating with the unwealdineſs of his carcaſs, in vain ſought for his horſe, in vain he called to his companions—none could be heard or found.

To make the ſport more laughable, the Prince and Poins diſguiſed themſelves in Buckram habits, and robbed Sir *John*, who at length having found his horſe, which was put in his way on purpoſe, he, with much ado, got upon his back, and regained the place where they had appointed

to

to meet; here Sir *John* abuſed the Prince and Poins, for having deſerted him, and left him to the mercy of a powerful banditti, who had robbed him of what he had robbed the carrier of, ſwearing he had been ſet upon by twenty at leaſt, and that he had fought luſtily with them all, but was over powered by numbers. He had hacked his ſword againſt a poſt, on purpoſe to make them believe it was hurt in this deſperate combat:—But in his relating this terible re-encounter, he could not help verifying the old ſaying, "that a liar ought to have a good memory," for his twenty rogues in Buckram, he ſoon reduced to ſevnteen, which preſently ſunk to thirteen, then eleven, and laſtly to three; every falſhood he related, he confirmed with an oath, till the Prince let him know, that it was only himſelf and Poins that attacked him, producing ſuch proofs, as it was impoſſible for him to contradict; yet, with his uſual vein of railery, he attempted to get himſelf out of the hobble, by ſwearing that he knew the Prince by inſtinct, and that although he was as courageous as a lion, he could not lift up his hand againſt the heir apparent, or contaminate his ſword, with drawing it upon Blood Royal. His wit, and manner of telling this ſtory, though it was all lies, filled them all with good humour, eſpecially when *Falſtaff* ſaid to the Prince, "I pr'ythee, ſweet wag, when thou art king, ſhall there be any gallows left ſtanding?"

The night concluded with their uſual mirth and feſtivity, when Sir *John*, having taken a hearty doſe of his favourite ſack, fell aſleep; during which time they picked his pocket, which afforded new matter for his talent of lying; for when he

he waked, and miſſed what he had in his pocket, he abuſed his hoſteſs, and ſaid he had been robbed to a very great amount. When the Prince produced the property, which conſiſted of a braſs cramp ring, a tavern bill for ſeveral gallons of ſack, ſome ſugar, and a penny worth of bread, which afforded a new ſcene of mirth and pleaſantry.

Henry the Fourth, formerly earl of Hereford, and who had depoſed king Richard the Second, aſcended the throne. He was continually alarmed with rebellions and conſpiracies, which made his life and reign a ſcene of trouble and vexation; the Prince ſpending his time in riot and debauchery, added not a little trouble to his mind, which he concluded, was a judgement on him for his cruelty to Richard.—Richard, for his over-bearing behaviour, had baniſhed him; but while he was gone to quell a rebellion in Ireland, Henry returned to England, pretending he came only to claim his earldom of Hereford; but no ſooner did opportunity offer, by the king's abſence, and his partiallity to his favourites, which not a little diſguſted many of his ſubjects, than Henry laid claim to the crown, and being aſſiſted by the nobles, eſpecially the earl of Northumberland, ſoon obtained what he aimed; and Richard, on his return from Ireland, was depoſed, and Bolingbroke was crowned. Shakeſpeare, on this remarkable occurrence, has the following paſſage:

" The firſt came Bolingbroke, upon a hot
And firey ſteed, which its aſpiring maſter
Seem'd to know, while all the people cried,
God

God ſave thee Bolingbroke!—Wellcome Bolingbroke!
Jeſus preſerve thee—wellcome Bolingbroke!
You would have thought the very walls had
Spoke, ſo many greedy ears of old and young,
Through caſements daſled their enquiring eyes.
While he, from one ſide to the other, leaning
Lower than his proud ſteed's neck, beſpoke
Them thus:—I thank you, countrymen, I thank
You; and then ſtill doing thus, he paſs'd along.
The next came Richard, but no one cried,
God ſave king Richard; no joyful tongue
Gave him his wellcome home, but duſt was
Thrown upon his ſacred head, which, with ſuch
Manly pitty, he ſhook off, (his face ſtill combating
With tears and ſmiles,) the badges of his grief
And patience, that had not God, for ſome
Strong purpoſe, ſteal'd the hearts of men,
They muſt therefore have melted, and Barbariſm
Itſelf have pittied him."

However, according to the beſt accounts, he meritted the fate he met for. He was inſolent, proud, and thoughtleſs in proſperity, and full of the notion, that he could not any way forfeit his crown, being the Lord's anointed, the common flattery by which kings are perverted into tyrants. But then poor, low, degected, deſpairing on the appearance of danger. In diſtreſs, he was always diſembling compliance in all things, but was never ſincere in performance when the danger was over; and he was ſoon after his depoſition,

poſition, murdered in Pomfret Caſtle, in Yorkſhire.

But like the fate of moſt uſurpers, Henry found enemies among thoſe who had been his particular friends; they thought themſelves ſlighted, eſpecially Percy, the earl of Northumberland's ſon, a very valiant, but hot brained young man, who having fought ſucceſsfully for the king againſt the Welch and Scots, took offence at Henry's aſking for his priſoners. A rebellion enſued, headed by young Percy, whoſe fame in arms, not a little troubled his mind, to think he had a ſubject ſo noble and fearful, as an enemy, while the Prince, his ſon and heir, neglected all martial and courtly exerciſes, and diſſipated his time in taverns with wicked companions.

The noiſe of *Falſtaff*'s robbery was now publickly known, and that the Prince had been concerned with him, but the matter was huſhed up on account of the troubles of the times.

The Prince was ſent for to court, and chid by his father, for his neglecting what equally concerned himſelf, as well as his father.

The modeſt and noble behaviour of the Prince to his parent, revived his hopes, and he had an appointment to march againſt Hotſpur, (which was the common name of young Percy.)

Falſtaff had likewiſe an order to recruit, and was waited on by the Lord Chief Juſtice, and reprimanded for the irregularity of his life, and his ſeducing the Prince, and leading him into the paths of vice and diſorder; but Sir *John* anſwered him in ironical manner, and turned all that was ſaid to redicule.

This

This worthy magiſtrate, is ſaid, to have once committed the Prince for bad behavour, and when he came to the throne, was applauded and rewarded for his behavour; having then a juſt ſence of his duty as a king, he at once dropt all his vices and follies, baniſhed his lewd companions, and gained immortal glory in the annals of his country, during the ſhort time he was king of England.

The nature of public affairs requiring diſpatch, the Prince was obliged to march againſt young Percy, while *Falſtaff* was to raiſe recruits, and join him.

But neither the danger of his country, or the thought of renown, could make him now alter his method of living; he ſpent the king's ſervice-money in taverns, and preſſed into the army, any of the moſt abject wretches he could pick up as he marched along; and when he was rediculed for the ragamuffins he had got, he very archly replied, they were well enough, they were food for powder; as to ſhirts, he ſaid there was but one and a-half in his company, and the whole one, was like a herald's coat without ſleves, being two napkins ſewed together, with ſlips left on the ſides for the arms to go through.

With ſuch ſort of recruits, he marched on; Piſtol was his adjutant, and Bardolf his ſerjeant, and one Nim his corporal, three of his theiving companions, who followed him as their captain and leader, either on the highway, or to the field of battle.

Bardolph, he called him his torchbearer, and ſwore, though it had coſt him ſo much in ſack to feed the fire which continually blazed in his noſe,

it

it was not much in his debt, as it had ſaved him not a little in links, by lighting him from tavern to tavern; nay, he once ſaid on ſeing, a flea upon his noſe, it was "like a damned ſoul burning in hell."

Sir *John* marched on with his troops, ſome of whom, he ſaid, ſeemed to have been collected from gibbets, others walked as wide as if they had fetters on; at length he joined the royal ſtandard, and the day of battle being appointed, he bragged what mighty feats he would perform, *Hot*ſpur was to be killed by him, if he came in his way, if he did not, he ſhould not take the trouble to ſeek after him: he always carried a bottle of ſack in his pocket, which he once offered the Prince in the field, who threw it down with ſome indignation.

At length the battle began, and Sir *John*, with his ſword and buckler, cut no ſmall figure among them; when finding Sir Walter Blunt dead, he began to ſoleloquiſe upon honor.

What is honour, ſay he, will honor ſet a leg or an arm? no, then honor is no ſurgeon,—I like not ſuch grining honor as Sir Walter hath; ſo after taking a ſuck from his ſack bottle, he marched on, till he met the fiery Percy, on the ſight of whom he fell down, and the hero finding he was a coward, left him; but meeting with the Prince, they fought, and the Prince was conqueror, who, at the moment he was dying, expreſſed himſelf to the following purpoſe:

"The vaſt renown thou haſt acquired by conquering Percy, afflicts him more than even his body's parting with his ſoul."

Percy being ſlain, the Prince goes to the king's tent, and *Falſtaff* riſes very carefully, and examines the body of Percy, and finding him really dead, he begins to think of gaining the honor of being his conqueror, to which purpoſe he makes a wound in his thigh, and then takes him upon his back, he carries him to the king's tent, he throws him down, and ſays, if your majeſty will do me any honor, well and good, if not, kill the next Percy yourſelf.—Tells him that it was himſelf that killed him, and that he ſaw him down alſo.

Sir *John* allows that he was down as well as Percy, but declares they both roſe at the ſame inſtant, and fought two hours by Shrewſbury clock, and gave him the wound in his thigh.

The Prince, not willing to expoſe his old acquaintance to his father, gives up his title, and let Sir *John* have the glory. The king, being ſeated on a drum in the field, as in council, Sir *John* placed himſelf behind, and fell faſt aſleep, and on the king's riſing, fell over the drum, which created no ſmall entertainment to the ſpectators.

This rebellion being happily ended, the king and prince, with their adherents, returned in peace.

But as the death of Henry the Fourth, and the ſucceſſion of the Prince to the throne, will conclude the hiſtorical character of *Falſtaff*, we ſhall proceed to that event as faſt as poſſible, and then proceed with the corpulent knight, to other ſcenes in which he was engaged, and which it is not doubted will give ſatisfaction to the candid reader.

Henry the Fourth, always had it in contemplation, of joining in a cruſade with the other Chriſtian powers, to diſpoſſeſs the Infidels of the Holy-land, and according to the diſpoſition of the times, it was propheſied he ſhould die in Jeruſalem, which he ſuppoſed meant the Holy-land; and indeed he was preparing for that expedition, when he was ſuddenly taken ill in a room, called *The Jeruſalem Chamber*, in Weſtminſter Abbey, where he departed this life, which litterally fulfilled the prophecy, *He died in Jeruſalem.*

Henry the Fifth ſucceeding, all his old followers, eſpecially *Falſtaff*, were brimful of expectation, but they were greatly diſappointed, for the king diſmiſſed them all, and baniſhed *Fat Jack* twenty miles from the court, on pain of death, telling him "I long have dreamed of ſuch a kind of man, but being awake, I diſpiſe my dream."

Here ended the courtly carreer of Sir *John*—having a proper allowance made him, he choſe Windſor for his reſidence.

And though Shakeſpeare has thought proper to kill him in the beginning of this king's reign, yet as he has thought proper to bring him to life in his "Merry Wives of Windſor," we ſhall follow his example, and drink a cup of ſack with him and mine hoſt of the garter, and join in the company of Sir Hugh Evans, doctor Caius, and the reſt of the characters in that celebrated piece.

Queen Elizabeth, it is ſaid, was ſo delighted with the character of *Falſtaff*, that ſhe expreſſed a deſire of ſeeing him in love; the hint was ſufficient to one of Shakeſpear's wonderful intention

and inimitable wit, and in a fortnight, it is ſaid, produced the laughable comedy of the *Merry Wives of Windſor.*

The merry knight, who reſided with mine hoſt of the garter, has vanity enough to ſuppoſe, that Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Page, (two gentlemens wives at Windſor) have taken a fancy to his unweildly corporation, his folly getting the better of his underſtanding, which is often the caſe, with the greateſt wits, not that he was of ſo amorous a conſtitution, as to propoſe to himſelf any particular gratification in the injoyment of their perſons, but imagined he might be gainer by paying his court to them, their huſbands being very rich.

Falſtaff having caſt about in his mind how to accompliſh his deſign, determines, at laſt, to write a letter to each of them, and that he might not put his wit to much expence, he makes one inditing ſerve for both; this epiſtle is written in the moſt bombaſtical manner, and concludes in this manner:

Thy own true knight,
For thee to fight,
By day or night,
Or any other light,

JOHN FALSTAFF.

Having fairly copied this in two letters, and directed the one to Mrs. Ford, and the other to Mrs. Page, he requeſts Piſtol to carry them, ſaying, that their eyes had glanced on his portly belly; Piſtol replied, "then did the ſun on dunghill ſhine."—Piſtol and Bardolf, both refuſe to

to carry his love epiſtles, expreſſing their indignation, at the thoughts of being degraded by his deſires of making them pimps; Sir *John*, in a paſſion, diſcards them both, accuſing them of ingratitude, for his paſt favours.

And the bombaſtical Piſtol, declares, "the world's mine oyſter, which I with ſword will open," intimating he will be a theif, that profeſſion being in their eyes more honorable than a pander.

Falſtaff, in this ſituation, applies to Mrs. Quickly, a ſervant to doctor Caius, a notable goſſip, and a kind of a go between Ann Page and her lovers, and who is likewiſe acquainted with Mrs. Ford.

This pratting lady undertakes the buſineſs, after receiving the knight's particular injunctions, not to let the parties know what ſhe did, but give them ſecretly and ſeperately to each other, which ſhe promiſed to do.

The buſineſs being ſettled, Sir *John*, with a merry countenance, returned to his hoſt of the garter, and ordered ſome mulled ſack to regale himſelf; being aſked if he would have an egg in it, he replied, no, "I will have no pullets ſperm in my brewing." Mine hoſt now came in, and rather diſconcerted Sir *John* at firſt, by letting him know what he was in his books, for ſack and other neceſſaries. Sir *John* recollecting himſelf, very ſoon informed him, that he had in expectation, a large quantity of the orumpotabile, from two mines, he had lately diſcovered, and which he was determined to work with the utmoſt aſſiduity and expedition.

The landlord, who knew Sir *John* very well, concluded he had ſome robbery in agitation, and he did not care how the money was got, ſo as he got it; he therefore very cordially ſat down, and helpt the knight in taking off a few more quarts of mulled ſack.

Falſtaff's corpulency, was not owing intirely to this fatening juice of the vine, but was greatly aſſiſted by the ſoperifirous god of ſleep, whoſe aid he ſollicited generally two or three times a day, and having now got his doſe, as the ſaying is, he thought proper to retire to his chamber, deſiring his hoſt not to diſturb him, until a gentlewoman, whom he expected ſhould call: The hoſt promiſed to obey, and the unweildy knight ſtaggered to his couch.

Dame Quickly, fulfilled her promiſe, and delivered the letters to the parties they were deſigned; and having received proper anſwers, proceeded with them to Sir *John*, who had promiſed to reward her amply, though he was more inclined to promiſe than to perform; yet, in this caſe, it may be ſuppoſed, he was not neglectful of the laſt, his own intereſt, as he flattered himſelf, being concerned. Bardolf and Piſtol, being diſcarded, as has been mentioned, they were determined to be revenged on him, and go and tell the huſbands, that Sir *John* had diſhonorable deſigns upon their wives: This reſolve they put in execution.

Page paid no regard to what they ſaid, being ſatisfied of his wife's diſcretion and virtue, he concluded his honor ſafe in her keeping; but Ford, who was naturally jealous, took fire at the very thoughts of ſuch diſgrace, determined to

ſearch

ſearch to the very bottom of this affair, he reſolves to go indiſguiſe to *Falſtaff*, and by cunning and bribery, win him, to diſcover every particular to him.

Falſtaff, taking a comfortable nap on his couch, fancy, in dreams, ſatisfied his warm imagination with love and riches. His raptures were ſo great, that on rolling about on his couch, he tumbled on the floor. The noiſe of ſuch a weight, made mine hoſt ſuppoſe the houſe was falling, but running into the ſtreet, to take a ſurvey, he found every thing ſafe, and the premiſes as ſound as ever. For a long time he was conſidering what could be the cauſe of ſuch an uncommon ſhock; on enquiry among the neighbours, none but the adjoining houſe heard any thing, and they had concluded it was an earthquake. At laſt he thought of going up ſtairs, in order to ſee if any thing had happened there, which could be the occaſion of it.

He was convinced of the cauſe, when he beheld the fat knight ſtretched out on the floor, ſnoring as loud as the roaring of a water-mill, for the fumes of the ſack had not yet evaporated, but continued to boil in his brain, like a pot on the fire with dumplings in it.

Mine hoſt, on entering his room, could not help laughing at his miſtake, and at the ridiculous figure Sir *John* cut, for his doublet had got looſe, and ſome parts of his body were diſplayed, which, for decentcy ſake, we forbear to mention.

Juſt at this critical event, Mrs. Quickly arrived, and enquiring below for *Falſtaff*'s apartment, was directed to it, and came juſt at the nick to behold the knight in this curious ſituation.

ſituation. She had entered the room before the landlord was aware of her. As ſoon as he beheld her, he begged ſhe would withdraw, as Sir *John* was in a fit, and he was endeavouring to recover him, which he doubted not he ſhould do in a ſhort time. The good woman would have aſſiſted, but he puſhed her out of doors, and bad her attend a few minutes.

Mine hoſt, pulled him and pinched him for ſome time, but to no effect; at laſt he bethought him to draw his ſword, and prick the knight in his poſteriors. This had the deſired effect. He opened his eyes, and beholding the naked weapon, his natural courage rouzed him, he jumped up with the greateſt alacrity, and was preparing for flight, when the landlord finding his valiant intention, laid hold of him, and cried, what, my bully-rock! my knight of the ſword and target! the ſon of the moon and ſtars! the king of purſe-takers! affraid of his hoſt of the garter! here, take thy ſword, thy truſty blade, and defend thyſelf againſt thy foes, but do not kill thy friends.—My bully—hark thee! there is a meſſenger from the court of love, waiting for thee without. She has ſeen thee in thy ſoporifics. By chance I told her you was in a fit—make thy beſt uſe of it—I will ſend her to thee.

The landlord departed, and left Sir *John* ruminating on what lies he ſhould utter firſt; but he had not time to ſtudy long, for Mrs. Quickly, being informed he was recovered, entered the room, and curtſied to Sir *John*, and was going to ſpeak, when the knight prevented her, by beginning firſt.

" Well,

"Well, my ſhe mercury, haſt thou performed my meſſage to the goddeſſes I ſent thee to?—Are their divinities inclined to hear me ſpeak my paſſion, which is ſo violent, that I have been rolling and jumbling about like a whale in the ocean, for above forty hours in a deſperate fit, which mine hoſt knows I am but juſt recovered from, and all on their account?"

Dame Quickly, was well acquainted with every character in Windſor, as well, or better than any one in the place, was not unacquainted with Sir *John*'s, therefore made no reply to this abominable falſhood, which was palpably ſo, as it was not ſix hours ſince he had given her the letters to carry.

She told him, that Mrs. Page had no opportunity to receive a viſit from him at preſent, but would let him know when ſhe had; but Mrs. Ford would be happy to have that honor in the afternoon, about five, when her huſband would be out, as he was a very jealous man, and ſhe was, indeed, affraid of ſeeing any one.

I will cure him of his jealouſy, Mrs. Quickly, ſaid the knight, I will make him a cuckold three ſtories height.—Mrs. Quickly, at five I will not forget—let us take a cup of ſack, Mrs. Quickly. Mrs. Quickly, was not averſe to a cup of this cheriſhing liquid, and gave her conſent, by a curtſy; not that ſhe was one of the ſilent women, but ſhe underſtood things well, and could talk, or let it alone, as ſuited her purpoſe beſt, which proved her wiſdom was ſuperior to her honeſty.

She ſmacked her lips with Sir *John*, and toſſed off the ſack with the happieſt ſatisfaction; and before ſhe took her leave, told him, that Mrs. Ford would

would ſend him a page, which was to act as a go-between, and would keep all ſecrets, and be faithful to both.

Sir *John* was punctual in rewarding Mrs. Quickly, and began to flatter himſelf the buſineſs was in a manner concluded.

But old *Jack*, you will find, was rather out in his reckoning, for theſe good wives, although inclined to mirth, were not inclined to be what Sir *John* would have them; indeed, Mrs. Page, paid a viſit to her old crony Mrs. Ford. immediately after ſhe had received her billetdoux, on purpoſe to let her know the wonderful conqueſt ſhe had made over the heart of Sir *John*.

She was not a little ſurpriſed, (after having read her elegant love epiſtle) to find Mrs. Ford had received another, couched in the very ſame terms, in the very ſame hand writing, and from the very ſame great perſon.

The duplicity of this truly wonderful knight, and the contempt they conceived at his having entertained an unworthy idea of their characters, fixed them in a reſolution, to feed him up with vain hopes, in order to make diverſion for themſelves, and by their merry conceits, puniſh the wicked knight, for harbouring ſo unworthy a thought of them

Mrs. Ford, indeed, had a farther view, which was to cure, if poſſible, her huſband of his jealouſy, which had, for a long time, made both their lives uncomfortable, and which, in the end, was happily effected.

It has before been mentioned, that Mr. Ford, from the information he had received from Piſtol and Bardolf, had the fire of jealouſy preſently kindled

kindled in his breaſt, where it was ſo fierce, as almoſt to burſt out in an alarming blaze; yet he was determined to confine it within bounds for the preſent, though it ſhould burn the inſide of the tenement where it was firſt blown up.

Diſguiſed, and un ler a fictious name, he went to the garter, and inquired for Sir *John Falſtaff*, who preſently made his appearance. Mr. Ford begged his pardon for the freedom he had taken, and ſaid, the character of ſo great a man had induced him to make bold, that he might have the pleaſure to drink a cup of ſack with him, in a room to themſelves, as he had ſomething particular he wiſhed to communicate.

Sir *John*, who never was a foe to ſack and good company, ſaid he was very agreeable, and bid the hoſt to ſhew them into a room.

Sack was called for in plenty, and Mr. Ford, who aſſumed the name of Brook, began to open the buſineſs he came about.

Sir *John*, ſaid he, by thoſe who pretend to know you, ſay that you are not more ſucceſsful in war than in love, and that you are a man of gallantry as well as wit, and though I am deſperately in love, I am the moſt baſhful and aukward creature in that buſineſs that ever was formed, therefore ſhould be glad of your advice and aſſiſtance.

Falſtaff, (drinking off a bumper of ſack to his health) told him, as far as was in his power, he was at his ſervice, when he was acquainted with the circumſtances; and drinking another bumper to their better acquaintance, waited for Maſter Brook to proceed, which he did, as follows:

Sir

Sir *John*, ſaid he, I doubt not a man of your wiſdom and known integrity, will be ſecret: There is a woman in this town who has ſtruck my fancy above all other women, but unluckily for me, ſhe is married, her huſband's name is Ford, a man of great property and ſtrict honor, who is ſo great an obſtakle in my way, that I diſpair of ever accompliſhing my wiſhes.

I have been told, (I know not how true) you ſtand fair in her good opinion; now what I have to beg of you is, to let me know the truth of ſuch report, and if ſhe does grant you any favours, I may urge that as a proof, that I have it in my power to expoſe her, and ſhe will ſooner comply with my deſires, than let the world know of her incontinence, as moſt women value their reputation; though in private, they will indulge their wanton appetites.—Let nothing be wanting, I have money in plenty—here is an hundred marks—I will double it the next time, only give me ſatisfactory demonſtration. She is falſe to her huſband, and I am not affraid of ſucceeding!

Sir *John* having wetted his gills again, replied, Maſter Brook, this is a buſineſs which it is againſt my honor to engage in, yet to oblige ſuch a gentleman, I would do any thing.—Here is my hand, Maſter Brook, you ſhall enjoy Ford's wife,—I ſay you ſhall, Maſter Brook —I am to meet her this evening at five o'clock, when ſhe has ſent me word, the cuckoldly knave will be out of the way. This is true, Maſter Brook! aye, as true as this is ſack, therefore to your good-health.

Ford,

Ford, who had now got all he wanted, paid the reckoning, and departed, promiſing to come again the next morning.

Falſtaff laughed heartily when he was gone, ſaid he liked ſuch brooks who run ſack in ſuch plentiful ſtreams, and had ſuch a rich mine of gold at the bottom.

Ford was not a little anxious for the hour, when as he thought, he ſhould detect his wife in her unlawful connections, and prepared himſelf with all the vengeance of a jealous mad-man, to expoſe his wife's adultry.

Falſtaff trimmed himſelf, with the care of a lover, to meet his miſtreſs; his beard was perfumed, his grey locks powdered, and he ſallied out like an old beau to them, at the time appointed.

He arrived as wiſhed for, and found the gentle Mrs. Ford alone, who received him with the kindeſt behavour; but he had not been a moment in hardly, when Mrs. Page, (as had been before contrived) knocked at the door; *Falſtaff* ſtept aſide while ſhe entered: She began, oh, Mrs. Ford, you are ruined! Mr. Ford is coming with my huſband, and half Windſor at his heels, ſtorming like a mad-man, and foaming at the mouth like a dog, he ſwears there is a man in the houſe, which you entertain on the moſt ſcandalous account; and if it is ſo, you certainly will be murdered, and him alſo, be it whom it will!

Mrs. Ford owned there was a gentleman in the houſe, who came on a friendly viſit, and ſhe would not have him hurt for all the world. S.r *John*, hearing this, came forward, deſiring he might hide ſomewhere; but he was informed, he

would ſearch every where; he would have got up the chimney, but was told, he always diſcharged his fowling-piece there. Mrs. Page ſeeing this, accuſed him of perfidy; but he wiſpered, he would ſatisfy her another time.

At laſt it was agreed, he ſhould be put into a large buck-baſket, and covered with foul linen, to be carried to Datchet Mead, to be waſhed.

This was ſcarcely put in execution, before Ford and his poſſy arrived. He came in with great fury, as the men were taking out the baſket, aſked what they had got there: Mrs. Ford, called him cot, bid him mind his horſe and his hounds, and not trouble himſelf with the bucking of foul linen. This reply anſwered the purpoſe, and the baſket was permitted to paſs. Ford then began to ſearch the houſe, calling his wife by the moſt opprobrious names, that ill temper could invent. He went into every cloſet in the houſe, from the cellar to the garret, looked in the neceſſary and the cradle, but all to no purpoſe—no Sir *John* was to be found; ſo that all he got by his jealouſy, was laughter, and pretended tears from his wife, whom he was obliged to coax and kiſs to make it up with again, and bear all the mockery of the women, and raillery of the men, for making ſuch a public fool of himſelf.

Indeed jealouſy is a very fatal paſſion, and is often the deſtruction of both parties; therefore every one ſhould be cautious how they take with thoſe whoſe are ſuſceptible of this dangerous diſorder of the mind.

The ſervants, who had their orders in private, as ſoon as they reached the water, bundled in the linen, Sir *John* and all, as pretending not to know

know that he was there; with much ado, they brought him upon dry land again, where, dripping like ſnow after a thaw, he went the neareſt way home he could, in order to accommodate himſelf with more comfortable apparel.

Mrs. Page, and Mrs. Ford, when informed by the ſervants on their return, were ready to burſt with laughing, to think how juſtly they had puniſhed the old fornicating knight; yet determined to have ſome more ſport, before they gave him up, they ſent the page with a note. Mrs. Ford, declaring her innocence in regard to his being thrown into the river, and begged he would come again the next morning, at the ſame time, when every thing ſhould be cleared up to his ſatisfaction, and he might be ſure of no interruption to his happineſs.

Sir *John*, indeed, like a prudent man, had reſolved in his mind never to venture his carcaſs any more in hunting of prohibited game; but the kindneſs of the note, made him alter his purpoſe, and break his reſolution, in hopes of gaining what was his aim.

Mr. Brook, in the morning, came according to promiſe, to enquire what ſucceſs.

Why, truly maſter Brook, damned bad ſucceſs; for, by ſome means or other, her jealous Ford, her huſband, by ſome means or other, had got ſcent of my being there: How to avoid his fury, (for he came armed) with an army of tag-rag at his heels.—I ſay, how to avoid him, was the point! at laſt, maſter Brook, they put me into a buck-baſket, ramed me down with foul linen, where I was almoſt poiſoned with ſuch a variety of filty ſmells, as never came together

at once before; but this was not all, the knaves flounced me into the river, with as little ceremony as they would an underſized gudgeon; and I having a certain alacrity at ſinking, was very nigh making my exit in freſh water, a thing which I could never abide.

I had fixed in my mind never to go any more; but I have recieved a meſſage, full of apologies, and begging of pardon, for what had happened, declaring, ſhe had not the leaſt knowledge of what had been done to me, and promiſing an explanation of the whole affair, if I will come again, this evening, at the ſame hour, promiſing that her cuckold will be out of the way, and there will be nothing to impede our happineſs; therefore, like a true knight, maſter Brook, I ſhall venture another courſe, and to morrow you ſhall know the ſucceſs of it.

Ford, who was now convinced that *Falſtaff* had been at his houſe, after treating Sir *John* with a ſufficient quantity of ſack, and giving him more money, departed, determined to be no more impoſed upon: but in this he was once more miſtaken.

Falſtaff, having comforted himſelf, not only with his old companions and mulled ſack, but likewiſe with the idea, that although he had been ſcurvily uſed on the one ſide, he had been amply rewarded on the other; and money and ſack were ſalves for all ſores.

At length the time appointed came, and he repaired, with eagerneſs, to meet, as he thought, his languiſhing miſtreſs; but true love often meets with unexpected croſſes and diſappointments; then how could ſuch a hypocretical, heretical,

heretical, pretender, as he was, expect to eſcape free.

No ſooner had he ſat down, than Mrs. Page, as before, came in the greateſt hurry, to inform her, that her huſband, in a greater rage than ever, was coming with as many more at his heels, ſwearing that Sir *John* was conveyed away in the buck-baſket, and that he was there again this evening! This put the knight into a terrible tremulation, and new means muſt be thought of for his eſcape: She happened to have in the houſe, a large ſuit of womens apparel, which belonged to an old fat fortune-teller, as ſhe pretended to be, this they diſguiſed Sir *John* in, above ſtairs; and when they heard Ford and the rabble were a coming, the buck baſket was ordered out, as before. Ford, thinking he was again concealed there, made the men ſet it down, and pulled out all the contents; but not finding him there, he was preparing to ſearch the houſe again, when the old woman was called to come down, who, they ſaid, was the witch of Brentford, whom Ford could not abide; therefore, as ſoon as ſhe appeared, he began to belabour poor Sir *John*, with his cane, in a moſt unmerciful manner, who was happy to get away at any rate. Ford, having vented his jealous rage to no more ſatisfaction than before, was again obliged to ſubmit, when thinking it the critical time to catch and to puniſh him. The next day, the merry wives explained the whole matter to the huſband, who being now quite aſhamed of his ridiculous conduct, promiſed never more to be guilty of the like again, and highly applauded

the ingenious way of puniſhing *old fat ſides*, in the manner it was done.

They all now joined together to torment *Falſtaff:* They plagued him—put horns upon his head—taunted him—and hunted him like a ſtag, till he ſweated ſo, that he ſmoaked like a wet dog in the ſun. When he was aſked by the huſband, why he followed the women ſo much? he replied, he followed them as men followed buſineſs, becauſe he could not help it.

Such was the humour of times, in the days of our anceſtors; and ſuch was the character of Sir *John Falſtaff*, as delienated by the poet, whoſe works will be read, even when after the Engliſh language ſhall ceaſe to be a living one He was not only witty in himſelf, but the cauſe of wit in others; and his death is as humouroufly related, by Mrs. Quickly, as any part of his character. She ſaid, that he, poor ſoul, when he was ſick, often ſent for her to feel his legs; that ſhe felt them, and they were cold, and then ſhe felt upwards, and upwards, and all was cold.

Farewell, Sir *John*,—by Shakeſpear's pen diſplay'd,
Thy wit and humour n'er can fall or fade;
While laughter ſhakes the ſides with honeſt glee,
Sure ev'ry reader muſt be pleas'd with thee.

HISTORY

HISTORY

OF THE

BOAR's HEAD TAVERN,

IN

EAST-CHEAP,

From Dr. GOLDSMITH.

IT is very difficult to fix the preciſe time of the erection of this once famous houſe of entertainment. It is certain, it was extant before the famous battle of Creſſy; for while William of Wickham, was ſurveyor of the building of Windſor Caſtle, he frequently came there to meet John of Gaunt, who was earl of Richmond, and duke of Lancaſter, and who contributed much to that public edifice. It was in this very houſe, that Prince Henry, eldeſt ſon of King Henry IV. and afterwards king, kept up his riotous exceſſes, and extravagant pranks, to ſuch a degree, that it occaſioned much noiſe at that time, as well as uneaſineſs to the king, his father. One day one of the prince's companions, being taken from hence, and arraigned for fellony, before William Gaſcoine, the Chief Juſtice of the King's Bench, the Prince was preſent at the tryal, to over-awe the judge; but his preſence not preventing the impartial adminiſtration of juſtice in the condemnation

nation of the criminal, young Henry was ſo exaſperated, as to ſtrike the judge on the face, who not regarding the quality of the offender, commanded him to be arreſted on the ſpot, and committed him to priſon, to which the prince as readily ſubmitted. The judge's firmneſs and intrepidity, and the prince's moderation, were equally pleaſing to the public in thoſe days, and continues to be admired, even down to the preſent times.

Shakeſpeare, has very aptly delineated the manners of theſe immoral illuſtrious gueſts. The character of *Falſtaff*, is one of the greateſt originals drawn by the pen of this inimitable maſter; and in the character of the Prince of Wales, the hero and the libertine, are ſo finely blended, that the ſpectator cannot avoid perceiving, even in the greateſt levity of the tavern rake, the moſt lively traces of the afterwards illuſtrious character of the conqueror of France.

Nothing remains upon record of the maſters or miſtreſſes of this tavern, no more than of the cuſtomers who uſed it, till the time of our hero. It was then kept by a gentlewoman, named Dame Quickly, whom Shakeſpeare repreſents as famous for her humour, as for excellent ſack and ſugar, which was the moſt frequent drink at her houſe, in thoſe days of royal merriment and debauchery. It has been often remarked, that a woman in a bar is never long lived; this was the caſe with widow Quickly; the butt of ſack was at her elbow, and the death of Sir *John* affected her ſo much, that ſhe drank more to drown her ſorrow, than ſhe drew to her cuſtomers: In fact, her grief was ſincere, and the liquor was excellent.

The

The Prior, of a neighbouring convent, ſaw, with regret, the way the widow was getting into; and having as much power as a Middleſex Juſtice has now, he took it into his head to aſſiſt her to the beſt of his power, and ſo gave her a licence for keeping a convenient houſe of reception, upon condition, that ſhe ſhould never make any hard bargains with the clergy; that he ſhould have a bottle of ſack every morning, and the liberty of confeſſing which of the girls he thought proper in private, every night. In theſe modern days of improvement, ſuch an eſtabliſhment would be deemed but a conivance at bawdy-houſe keeping, but at that time, an holy man, like his mother-church could not err; and though lay-men ſaw through the cheat, the cowl covered all, and was a cloak for many another deception.

Dame Quickly, continued for ſeveral years to pay this tribute to eccleſiaſtical luxury, and the Prior as rigorouſly to exact it. She grew old inſenſibly. Her cuſtomers, however, ſtill complimented her looks before her face; but when her back was turned, ſhe could hear them whiſper their apprehenſions of her ſpeedy diſſolution, "Good, lack! how our dame wears away, ſhe's upon her laſt legs; if ſhe winters it, ſhe will have a hard bout to get over May-hill."

The Prior, however, ſtill was conſtant, and ſo were half his convent: But one fatal morning he miſſed his uſual beverage, for the dame had inadvertently drank the laſt bottle over-night herſelf, and in the morning there was not a drop for Mr. Prior; and beſides, to crown all the miſchief, Alice Tearſheet had the cholic, and could not admit his careſſes. The next day, therefore,

therefore, the dame and the ſiſterhood were ſent to the houſe of correction, and accuſed of keeping a common bawdy-houſe: In ſhort, they were ſo ill treated there, or, in other words, ſo well purified with ſtripes, mortifications, and penance, that they were utterly unfit for worldly converſation. Though ſack would have ſoon killed her, had ſhe now ſtuck to it as before, yet ſhe ſoon died for want of a drop of ſomething comfortable, and unhappily left her corpſe to the care of the beadle.

Her body was no ſooner laid in the grave, than the Prior, and ſeveral of his convent, came to purify the tavern from the polutions with which they ſaid ſhe had filled it. Maſſes were ſaid in every room, reliques were expoſed upon every piece of furniture, and the whole houſe was waſhed with a deluge of holy water. The houſe was ſoon converted into a monaſtery; and images, inſtead of chequer-boards and bunches of grapes, were hung up in every room to ſanctify the place: In ſhort, the tavern was ſoon converted into a monaſtery; inſtead of cuſtomers now applying for ſack and ſugar, the rooms were crowded with hypocrites and devotees, whores and fryars, all with reliques in their hands, repeating what they did not underſtand; inſtead of the merry catch and glee, with which the walls uſed to reverberate, nothing but *aves* and *paters* were now heard; and inſtead of being a ſcene of occaſional debauchery, it was now filled with continual lewdneſs. The Prior led the faſhion, and the whole convent imitated his pious example. Matrons came hither to confeſs their ſins, and to commit new; virgins came alſo hither, who ſeldom went virgins

gins away. Nor was this a convent peculiarly wicked; every convent, at that period, was equally fond of libidinous pleaſures, and gave a boundleſs looſe to appetites, which the Popes of that time indulged, becauſe they were equally fond of thoſe pleaſures. The laws even allowed them. Each prieſt had a right to a favourite companion, and a power of abſolving her, and diſcarding her, as often as he pleaſed. The laity grumbled, quarrelled with their wives and daughters, hated their confeſſors, and yet maintained them in opulence and eaſe. Theſe were the happy times of bravery, piety, and ſimplicity, when a walk to the holy land, and kiſſing a few reliques and bones, expiated a long life of atrocious crimes and nefarious practices. If we compare thoſe times with the preſent, we ſhall find but little difference; the motives of human action have always been the ſame, and few have ever had the boldneſs to be more honeſt than the times they lived in. Thoſe that laboured, ſtarved then as well as now; and thoſe that did nothing, wore fine cloathes, and lived in luxury, juſt as at the preſent day.

In this manner lived the fathers, for ſome years, without moleſtation; they tranſgreſſed, confeſſed themſelves to each other, abſolved one another, and were forgiven. One evening, however, the Prior keeping a lady of diſtinction ſomewhat too long at confeſſion, her huſband unexpectedly came in upon them, and teſtified all the indignation which was natural upon ſuch an occaſion. The Prior aſſured the gentleman, that it was nothing but the devil who had put it into his heart to be jealous; and the lady, ſolemnly affirmed, that

that ſhe was under the influence of magic, or ſhe never could have behaved in ſuch an unfaithful manner. The huſband, however, was not to be put off by ſuch evaſions, but ſummoned both parties before the tribunal of juſtice His proofs were ſo flagrant, that he had the temerity to expect, and to aſk large damages. Such, indeed, he had a right to expect, were the tribunals of thoſe days, conſtituted in the ſame manner as they are now. But it was otherwiſe. The cauſe of the prieſt, was to be tried before an aſſembly of prieſts; and what candour or impartiallity could an injured huſband expect, and a lay-man too, from ſuch a jury? The Prior denied the fact, and, acccording to the ſpirit of the times, challenged the plaintiff to try the merits of their cauſe by the medium of ſingle combat. It was a little hard to be ſure, upon the poor gent'eman, not only to be made a cuckold, but to be obliged to fight into the bargain; yet ſuch was the manners of the times. The Prior threw down his glove, and the injured huſband was obliged to take up, in token of his innocence, and of his accepting the challenge.

Upon this the prieſt ſupplied his champion, for it was not lawful for the clergy to fight; and the defendant and plaintiff, according to cuſtom, were put in priſon; but ordered to faſt and pray, every method being previouſly u'ed to induce both to a confeſſion of the truth. After a month's imprisonment, the hair of each was cut, the bodies anointed with oil, the field of battle appointed, and guarded by ſoldiers, while his majeſty preſided over the whole in perſon. Both the champions were ſworn not to ſeek victory, either by fraud

fraud or magic. They prayed, and confeſſed upon their knees; and, after theſe ceremonies, the reſt was left to the courage and conduct of the combatants As the champion whom the Prior had pitched upon, was a good hand, and had fought many times upon ſimilar occaſions, it was not very extraordinary if he proved the conqueror in this encounter. In ſhort, the huſband was diſcomfitted; he was taken from the field of battle, ſtripped to the ſhirt, and after one of his legs was cut off, as juſtice ordained in ſuch caſes, he was hanged as a terror to future offenders. Theſe are the times which have been ſo much admired of late, that every gothic remain, that could be ſcraped up, has been held to the world as of infinite more value than the productions of the preſent day; and references to theſe feudal times, are often made, with as much veneration, as if they were holy, or golden days of juſtice and urbanity. But the ſame motives which could then induce a prieſt to ſell his conſcience to a bad cauſe, has often, of late, prevailed over an elector to ſell his vote to a bad man; or a ſwearer, at the Old Bailey, his oath to ſave a villian from an ignominious death, which his crimes juſtly deſerved. In fact, in thoſe days there were no laws hardly deſerving the name of ſuch, and now a multiplicity of laws, give a judge as much power as a want of law, ſince he is always ſure to find among the number ſome to countenance his partiality.

The convent, now victorious over their enemies, gave a looſe to the demonſtration of joy. The lady became a nun, the prior became a biſhop, and three wickliffites were burned in

the illuminations and fire-works that were made on that memorable occaſion. It was now that religious pride was at its height; and the convent, at this period, began to enjoy a very high degree of reputation indeed. There was not one in London, that had the character of hating heretics ſo much as this. Ladies of the firſt diſtinction choſe from it their confeſſors; in ſhort, it flouriſhed, and might have flouriſhed to this hour, but for a fatal accident which terminated in its overthrow: The lady, whom the Prior had placed in a nunnery, and whom he continued to viſit for ſome time with great punctuallity, began at laſt to perceive that ſhe was quite forſaken; ſecluded from converſation, as uſual, ſhe now entertained the viſions of a devotee, found herſelf ſtrangely diſturbed, but heſitated in determining whether ſhe was poſſeſſed by an Angel or a Dæmon. She was not long in ſuſpence; for upon vomiting a large quantity of crooked pins, and finding the palms of her hands turned outwards, ſhe quickly concluded, that ſhe was poſſeſſed by the devil. She ſoon after loſt entirely the uſe of ſpeech, and when ſhe ſeemed to ſpeak, every body that was preſent, perceived her voice was not her own, but that of the devil within her; in ſhort, ſhe was bewitched, and all the difficulty lay in determining who it could be that bewitched her. The nuns and monks all demanded the magician's name, but the devil made no reply, for he knew they had no authority to aſk queſtions. By the rules of witchcraft, when an evil ſpirit has taken poſſeſſion, he may refuſe to anſwer any queſtions aſked him, unleſs they are put by a biſhop, and to theſe he is obliged

to

to reply. A biſhop was therefore ſent for, and now the ſecret came out. The devil reluctantly owned that he was a ſervant of the Prior; that, by his command, he reſided in his preſent habitation; and that, without his command, he was reſolved to keep in poſſeſſion. The biſhop was an able exorciſt; he drove the devil out by force of myſtical arms; the Prior was arraigned for witchcraft; the witneſſes were ſtrong and numerous againſt him, not leſs than fourteen perſons being by, who had heard the devil talk Latin. There was no reſiſting ſuch a cloud of witneſſes: the Prior was condemned; and he who had aſſiſted at ſo many burnings, was burned himſelf in turn. Thoſe were the times when folks believed; not like the preſent, when every doctrine is called in queſtion. They were ſincere believers; and if they were faulty in believing what the devil was pleaſed to tell them; we are perhaps worſe, in believing neither God nor devil. After ſuch a ſtain upon the convent, it was not to be ſuppoſed it could ſubſiſt any longer; the fathers were ordered to decamp, and the houſe was again converted into a tavern. The king conferred it on one of his caſt off miſtreſſes: She was conſtituted landlady by royal authority; and as the tavern was in the neighbourhood of the court, and the miſtreſs a very polite woman, it began to have more buſineſs than ever, and ſometimes took not leſs than four ſhillings a day.

To give the reader an idea of what were the peculiar qualifications of women of faſhion at that period, a deſcription of the preſent landlady will exhibit a tolerable picture of all the reſt.

This lady, was the daughter of a nobleman, and had received ſuch an education in the country, as became her quality, beauty, and great expectations. She could make ſhifts and hoſe for herſelf and all the ſervants of the family, when ſhe was but twelve years old. She knew the names of the four and twenty letters, ſo that it was impoſſible to bewitch her; and this was a greater piece of learning than any lady in the country cou'd pretend to. She was always up early, and ſaw breakfaſt ſerved in the great hall, by ſix o'clock. At this ſcene of feſtivity, ſhe generally improved good humour, by telling her dreams, relating ſtories of ſpirits; ſeveral of which, ſhe herſelf had ſeen; and one of which, ſhe was reported to have killed with a black-hafted knife. From hence, ſhe uſually went to make paſtry in the larder, and here ſhe was followed by her ſweat hearts, who were much helped on in converſation, by ſtruggling with her for kiſſes. About ten, Miſs generally went to play at hot-cockles, and blind-man's buff, in the parlour; and when the young folks (for they ſeldom played at that game when grown old) were tired of ſuch amuſements, the gentlemen entertained Miſs with the hiſtory of their grey-hounds, bear-beatings, and victories at cudgel playing. If the weather was fine, they ran at the ring, ſhot at butts; while Miſs held in her hand a ribbon, with which ſhe adorned the conqueror. Her mental accompliſhments were exactly fitted to her external qualifications Before ſhe was fifteen, ſhe could repeat the whole ballad of "Chevy Chace," could name every mountain that was inhabited by fairies, knew a witch at firſt ſight, and could repeat

repeat four Latin prayers without a prompter. Her dreſs was perfectly faſhionable; her arms and her hair were completely covered; a monſtruous ruff was placed round her neck, ſo that her head reſembled that of St. John the Baptiſt, when placed in the charger: In ſhort, when completely equipped, her appearance was ſo very modeſt, that ſhe diſcovered little more than her noſe.

Theſe were times when every lady that had a well ſhaped noſe, was accounted a beauty; and when every woman that could tell ſtories, might be cried up for a wit. In thoſe times, if the ladies concealed too much of their charming perſons, our modern females now diſcover too much; they run from one extream to another: one age produces female pedantry, and the next leaves the mind vacant and uncultivated.

You may be ſure that Miſs choſe a huſband with qualifications reſembling her own. She pitched upon a courtier, equally remarkable for hunting and drinking, who had given manifeſt proofs of his great vivility among the daughters and ſiſters of his tenants and domeſtics. They fell in love at firſt ſight, (for ſuch was the gallantry of the times), were married—came to court—where madam appeared with ſuperior qualifications. The king was ſtruck with her beauty. All property was, at that time, at the king's command; the huſband was obliged to reſign all pretenſions to his wife, to the ſovereign whom God had anointed to commit adultery where he thought proper. The king loved her for ſome time; but, at length, repenting of his misdeeds, and inſtigated by his father confeſſor, from a

principle of conſcience, removed her from his levee, to the bar of this tavern, and took a new miſtreſs in her ſtead. Let it not ſurpriſe you, to behold the miſtreſs of a king degraded to ſo humble an office. As the ladies had no mental accompliſhments, a good face was enough to raiſe them to the royal couch: And ſhe who was this day a royal miſtreſs, might the next, when her beauty palled upon enjoyment, be doomed to infamy and want.

Under the care of this lady, the tavern grew into great reputation: The courtiers had not yet learned to game, but they paid it off by drinking. Drunkeneſs is ever the vice of a barbarous, and gaming, of a luxurious age. They had not ſuch frequent entertainments as the moderns have, but were more expenſive, and more extravagant in thoſe they had. All their fooleries were more elaborate, and more admired by the great and the vulgar, than now. A courtier has been known to ſpend his whole fortune at a ſingle feaſt; a king to mortgage his dominions, to furniſh out the frippery of a tournament. There were certain days appointed for riot and debauchery; and to be ſober at ſuch times, was reputed a crime. Kings themſelves ſet the example; and monarchs have been ſeen drunk before the entertainment was half concluded. Theſe were the times, when kings kept miſtreſſes, and got drunk in public: they were too plain to hide their vices, and act the hypocrites; however, we ſleep in better ſecurity now than the greateſt could at that time, when they were liable to have their wives taken from their ſides, to adorn the couch of an abſolute luxurious monarch.

No

No landlady upon earth, knew better how to put off her damaged wines or women, with more art than ſhe. When theſe grew flat, or thoſe paltry, it was but changing the names; the wines became excellent, the girls agreeable. She was alſo poſſeſſed of the engaging leer, the chuck under the-chin, winked at a double entendre, could nick the opportunity of calling for ſomething comfortable, and perfectly underſtood the diſcreet moments when to withdraw. The gallants, of thoſe times, pretty much reſembled the bloods of ours; they were fond of pleaſure, but quite ignorant of the art of refining upon it. Thus, a court bawd, of thoſe times, reſembled the common low lived harridan of a modern bagnio. A tavern may be ſaid to be a true picture of human infirmity and depravity. Hiſtory only exhibits one ſide to our view; but, in the accounts of a tavern, we behold every age, equally abſurd and equally vicious.

Upon this lady's deceaſe, the tavern was ſucceſſively occupied by adventurers, bullies, pimps, and gameſters. Towards the concluſion of the reign of Henry the Seventh, gaming was more univerſally practiced in England, than even now. Kings themſelves have been known to play off, at primero, not only all the money and jewels they could part with, but the very images and ornaments in churches. The laſt Henry, played away in this very tavern, not only the four great bells of Saint Paul's cathedral, but the fine image of Saint Paul, which ſtood on the top of the ſpire, to Sir Miles Partridge, who took them down the next day, and ſold them by auction. What cauſe have we then to regret,

being

being born in the times we now live? Or do we ſtill believe that human nature continues to run on declining in every age? If we obſerve the actions of the buſy part of mankind, our anceſtors will be found infinitely more groſs, ſervile, and even diſhoneſt, than ourſelves. If, forſaking hiſtory, we only trace them in their hours of amuſement and diſſipation, we ſhall find them more ſenſual, more devoted to groſs pleaſures, and infinitely more ſelfiſh.

The laſt hoſteſs of note, upon record, was Jane Rouſe. She was born among the lower ranks of the people; and, by frugallity and extream complaiſance, contrived to acquire a moderate fortune. This ſhe might have enjoyed for many years, had ſhe not unfortunately quarelled with one of her neighbours, a woman who was in high repute for ſanctity through the whole pariſh. In theſe times, two women ſeldom quarelled, that did not not accuſe the other of witchcraft; and ſhe who could firſt contrive to vomit crooked pins, was ſure to come off victorious. The ſcandal of a modern tea-table, differs widely from the ſcandal of former times. The faſcination of a lady's eyes, at preſent, is regarded as a compliment; but if a lady formerly ſhould be accuſed of having witchcraft in her eyes, it were much better, both for her ſoul and body, that ſhe had no eyes at all. In ſhort, Jane Rouſe was accuſed of witchcraft; and, though ſhe made the beſt defence ſhe could, it was all to no purpoſe. She was taken from her own bar, to the bar of the Old Bailey, condemned, and executed accordingly. Theſe were times, indeed, when even women could not ſcold in ſafety!

Since

Since her time, the tavern underwent ſeveral revolutions, according to the ſpirit of the times, or the diſpoſition of the reigning monarch. It was one day a brothel, and the next a conventicle for hypocritical enthuſiaſts; it was this day noted for harbouring loyaliſts, and to-morrow for ſecretting republicans; ſometimes notorious for harbouring whigs, and again infamous for a retreat to tories. Some years ago, it was in high vogue, but at preſent, trade ſeems declining. This only may be remarked in general, that whenever taverns flouriſh moſt, the times are then the moſt extravagant and luxurious.

The original building was wood, conſtructed according to the manner of the times, with one ſtory projecting over the other, and ornamented with vaſt Gothic windows; in the middle of which, was to be ſeen, ſome pleaſant device, atchievement or coat of arms, ſtained in the glaſs. At the door ſtood a vaſt grape vine, growing upon the ſupporters; and over the door-way, a blue boar, a bachus, a tun, and a bunch of grapes. The appartments within, were accommodated with mighty large chimney places, adorned alſo with great impoſt carving, much in the Bacchanalian ſtile; and if the reader has ever been to Weſtminſter-Abbey, and taken up the ſeats, which turn with hinges, in Henry the Seventh's chapel, he has ſeen ſpecimens of the ſculpture of the days of Sir *John Falſtaff*. But fire, which devours all things, expoſed to its boundleſs fury, put a period to its magnificence, in the memorable year 1666; ſince which it has been rebuilt, in the preſent manner, and bears the date of 1668.

A traveller, who viſited London a very few years ſince, has left the following remarks on this famous edifice; and as the relation of his inquiries is much in the manner of Sterne, it is hoped they will not diſpleaſe the reader.

" I could not omit a ſight of this remarkable place; but on my approach to Eaſt Cheap, the inhabitants were fled, the houſe ſhut up, and, inſtead of an half-timber building, with one ſtory projecting over the other, as I expected, the edifice was modern, with a date on the front of 1668. I immediately concluded the old houſe was burnt down by the great fire; that tradition and Goldſmith had miſinformed me, and that farther reſearches were vain.

" On each ſide the door-way is a vinebranch, carved in wood, riſing more than three feet from the ground, loaded with leaves and cluſters; and on the top of each a little *Falſtaff*, eight inches high, in the dreſs of his days, ſuch as is ſeen at Covent Garden, by his faithful repreſentative. This induced me to proſecute my enquires.

" If I enter a butcher's ſhop, he gives me a welcome look; the ſale of a joint of meat enters the fine nerves of his brain, and the profit enters his pocket; and all this is tranſacted before I can open my mouth. But when I aſk a frivolous queſtion, I immediately turn a dead cuſtomer upon his hands; and he looks ſour upon mine.

" A man is more or leſs acceptable according to the errand on which he comes. I found I was the greateſt piece of lumber in his ſhop.

" There is ſuch a thing however as imperceptibly warming a perſon into good-humour, unobſerved by himſelf. When this was accompliſhed, he informed

formed me, that the place was ſold by auction, three weeks before, at Garraway's coffee-houſe; that the purchaſer was a ſtranger, and had the keys; that a ſight could not be obtained; that if he was maſter of the ſpot, he would directly chop off, as uſeleſs trumpery, the vine-branches, that ſprouted from the door; that there was nothing worth ſeeing within, but that he himſelf was poſſeſſed of a ſnuff-box, the painting of which repreſented *every thing in the world.* But as every thing in the world was too much for one man to ſee, and as I never heard that Sir *John* took ſnuff, I did not expreſs a deſire to ſee it.

"I made many viſits to the Blue Boar's Head, and as many applications to the neighbours; but there is nothing more difficult than to find out a curioſity which depends upon others, and which nobody regards. With ſome trouble I procured a ſight of the back buildings. I found them in that antient ſtate, which convinced me, that tradition, Shakeſpeare, and Goldſmith, were right; and could I have gained admiſſion into the premiſes of mine hoſteſs Mr. Quickly, I ſhould certainly have drunk a cup of ſack in memory of the bulky knight."

Having diſmiſſed Sir *John* as Shakeſpeare's hero, let us now take a view of his ſerious tranſactions, as far as the ſcanty remains of hiſtorical evidence relating to him will go. It appears he was a benefactor to both the univerſities, bequathing a conſiderable legacy to Cambridge, for building the ſchools of philoſophy and civil laws; and at Oxford, he was ſo bountiful to Magdalen-college, through the affection he had for his friend William Wainfleet, the founder, that his name

name is there commemorated in an anniverſary ſpeech. It would carry us too far, if we ſhould enumerate the many inſtances of his munificence: ſuffice it to ſay, that no retirement could obſcure his reputation, no infirmities weaken him in the exerciſe of his generous ſpirit to the laſt. He died in 1459, upwards of fourſcore years of age, as we learn from his noted cotemporary, William Caxton, our firſt printer: who ſays, in the preface to Cicero's Tract of Old Age, which he printed in Engliſh in 1481, that "it was tranſlated, and thyſtoryes openly declared, by the ordenaunce and deſyre of the noble auncyent knight, Syr *Johan Falſtolff*, of the Countee of Norfolk, Banneret, lyving the age of fourſcore yere; exercyſing the warrys in the Royame of Fraunce and other countrees, for the diffence and unyverſal welfare of both Royames of England and Fraunce."

Whether Shakeſpeare intended a poetical, or hiſtorical character in his *Falſtaff*, whether he drew a mere fictitious perſonage, or meant to ſhadow out our *Faſtolff* under it, we will not abſolutely determine; but if the latter, which ſeems to be the prevailing opinion, it is neceſſary to ſuppoſe, either that *Falſtaff's* character appeared in a very different light to him from what it does to us, or that he carried the poetic ſcience very much too far.

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